

# Unravelling the Hidden Agenda Between Female Students and Extra-Curricular Physical Activity in Higher Education

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# Preamble

- ▶ Ongoing research, to monitor the physical activity patterns amongst West African female students, within a UK university in the North West of England.
- ▶ Research findings are inconclusive. Continued monitoring within the 2018/19 academic year, to assess the implementation and impact of the proposed intervention.
- ▶ Due to the demographics of the West African female students, their barriers differ to students from an Indian or Afro-Caribbean background (*age and culture*).

# Research Questions

- ▶ To what extent do West African female students, engage in extra-curricular activities whilst at university in the United Kingdom (UK)?
- ▶ How do the physical activity opportunities available, appeal to West African female students?
- ▶ What promotional strategies do universities employ to promote physical activity practices, in partnership with teaching and learning?

# Curricular v Extra-Curricular Activities

Curricular	Non-curricular
Field trips	Engagement in sport or recreational activities
Lecture/Seminar	Attend student union society <i>(Anime, LGBT, Geek society, Gaming)</i>
Tutorial	Attend music or language sessions
Student representative duties	Volunteering / Community work

Extra curricular physical activity (ECPA), is the opportunity to participate in an activity outside of structured lecture or seminar time (Smith et al., 2007). Within an HE context, these activities mostly take part during lunch time or after the academic teaching day (Macdonald et al., 2013).

Research by Al-Ansari et al, (2016) suggests 60% of students did not think extra-curricular activities, impacted upon their studies. Additionally the majority of the students, viewed extra-curricular activities as a suitable method to make friends and socialise.

# Extra Curricular Physical Activity (ECPA)

## *Theoretical Perspectives*

# Physical Inactivity

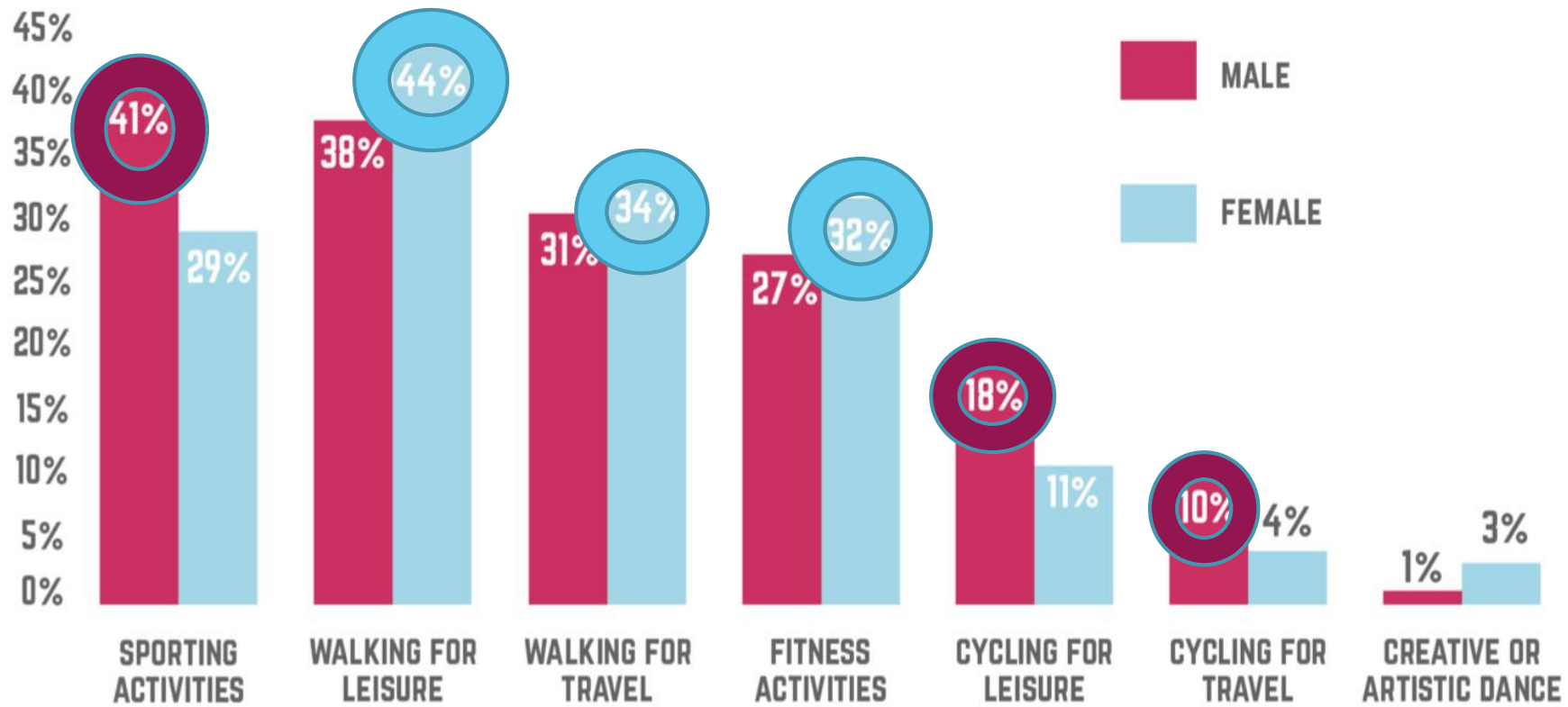
- ▶ Physical inactivity is the 4th leading risk factor for global mortality, accounting for 6% of deaths globally (Hallal et al., 2012).
- ▶ Sedentary behaviour increases the risk of health diseases (Sparling et al., 2015). Previous research states regular physical activity, supports a positive lifestyle and has both physical and mental benefits (Lapa, 2015).

- ▶ In the UK, 6/10 adults are physically active (150+ minutes per week).
- ▶ Current statistics imply the following data, in relation to the physical activity recommended guidelines for males and females.

Men	Women
63% 13.8m	58% 13.3m

# Physical Activity

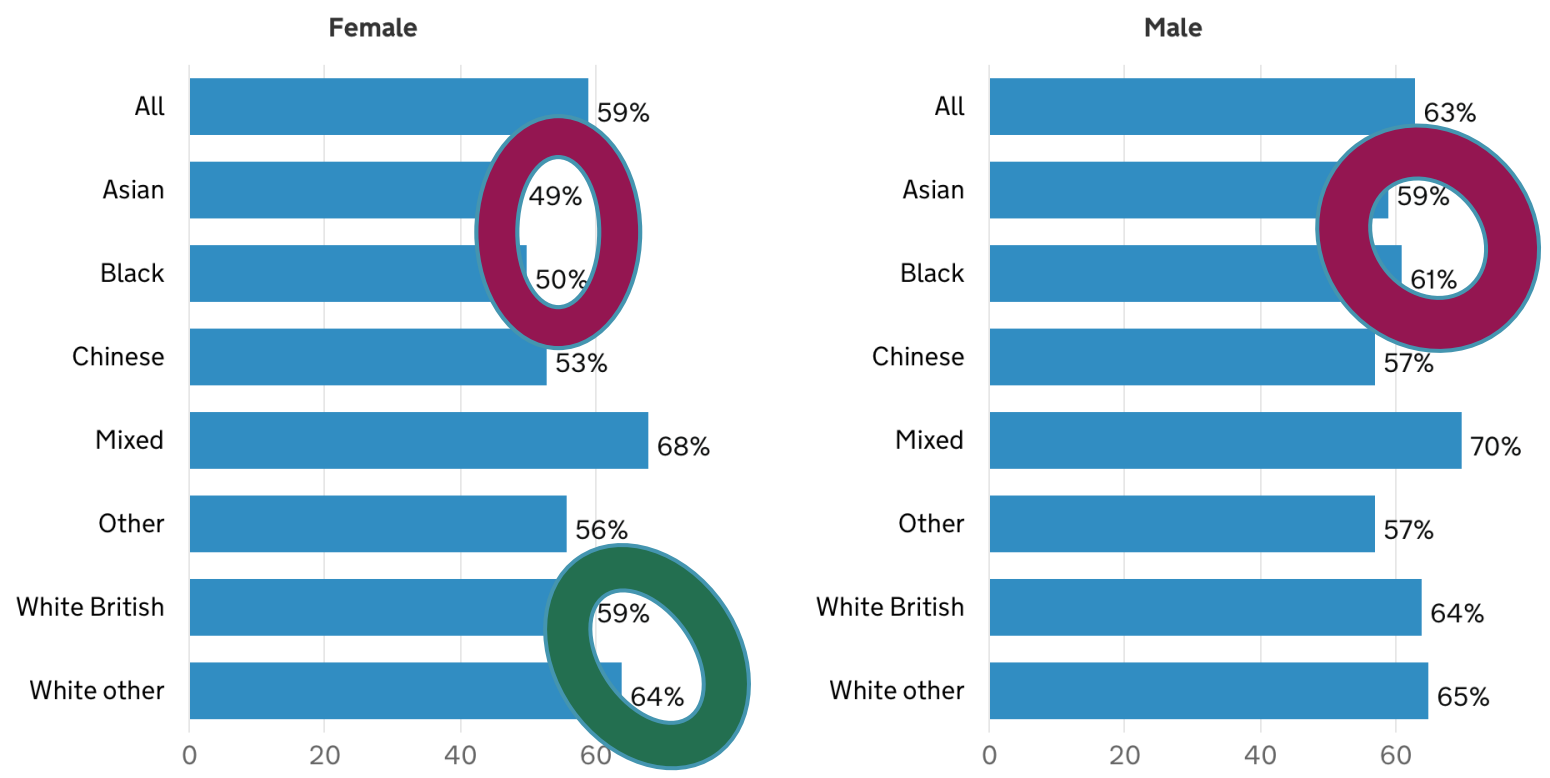
TAKEN PART AT LEAST TWICE IN THE LAST 28 DAYS (AGE 16+)



(Sportengland.org, 2018)

***£250 million invested into inactivity***

# Percentage of people classed as physically active by ethnicity and gender

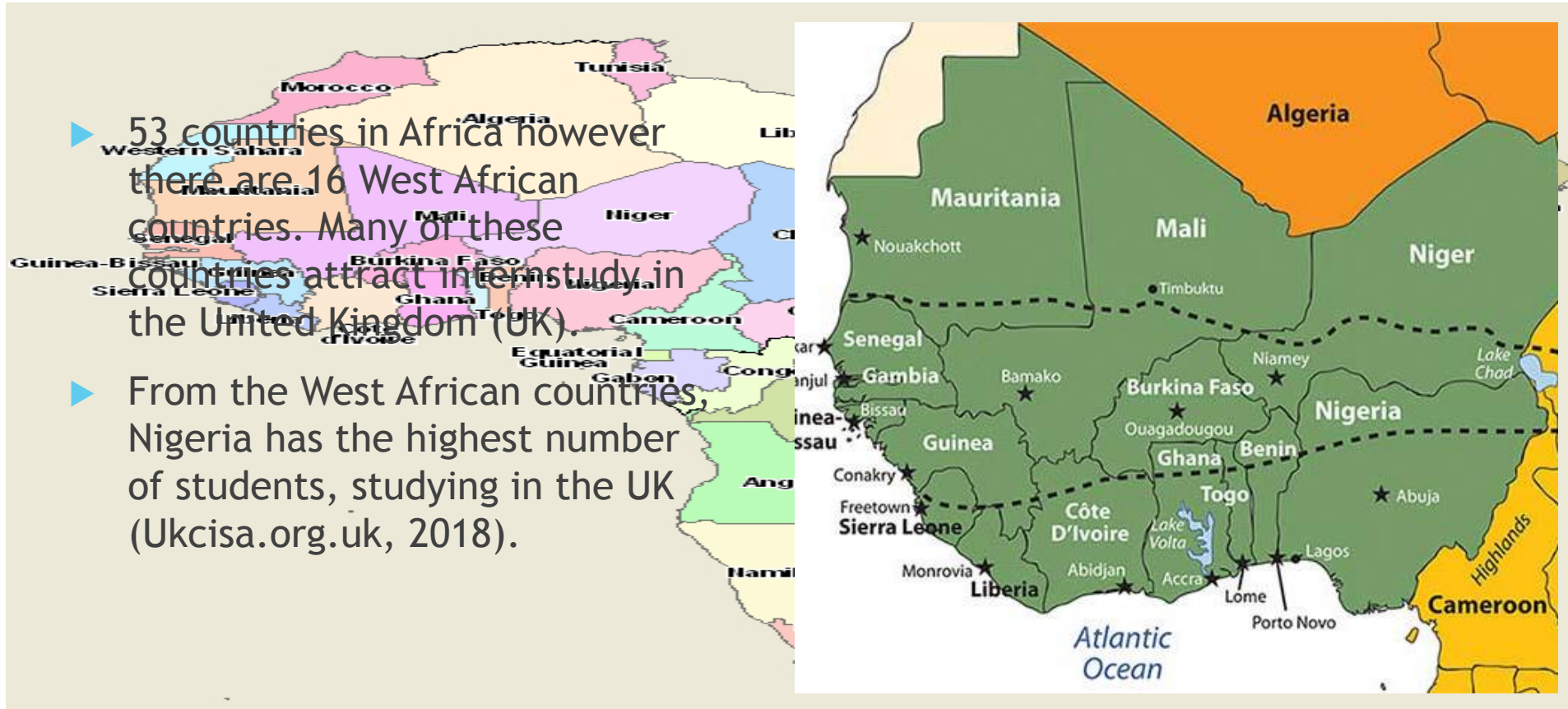


(Department for Digital, 2018)



# West Africa - Geographical Location

- ▶ 53 countries in Africa however there are 16 West African countries. Many of these countries attract internstudy in the United Kingdom (UK).
- ▶ From the West African countries, Nigeria has the highest number of students, studying in the UK (Ukcisa.org.uk, 2018).



# Higher Education & Diaspora

- ▶ A migrant can be defined as a person who was born outside of the United Kingdom (UK) however has resided in the UK prior to recruitment on an educational course, for 12 months or longer (Ons.gov.uk, 2018).
- ▶ For many West African students, educating in the UK can be seen as a 'golden ticket' opportunity for greater prospects (Hyams-Ssekasi, Mushibwe and Caldwell, 2014).
- ▶ Caldwell and Hyams-Ssekasi (2016) identify the majority of African students, attending UK universities are from West Africa.
- ▶ Graduating at a UK university, allows future career prospects and intercultural awareness (Brooks and Waters, 2011).

# Emerging Theories

- ▶ Coakley (2015) indicates the importance of critical theory and the emerging changes within history and culture.
- ▶ Afrocentrism refers to the values of family, religion, culture and the community of African women, historically women were oppressed by gender hierarchies (Armstrong, 2013).
- ▶ Collins (2000) and Asante (2015) outline an Afrocentric feminist epistemology, which considers the analysis of experiences of African women.
- ▶ Cultural anthropology research, suggests universities need to be aware of their diverse student population and should aim to coordinate varied approaches for community engagement of non UK populations (Eller, 2016).
- ▶ Sport England invested £11m into university sport, via the University Sport Activation Fund in support of the British Universities and Colleges Sport organisation (Sportengland.org, 2018).

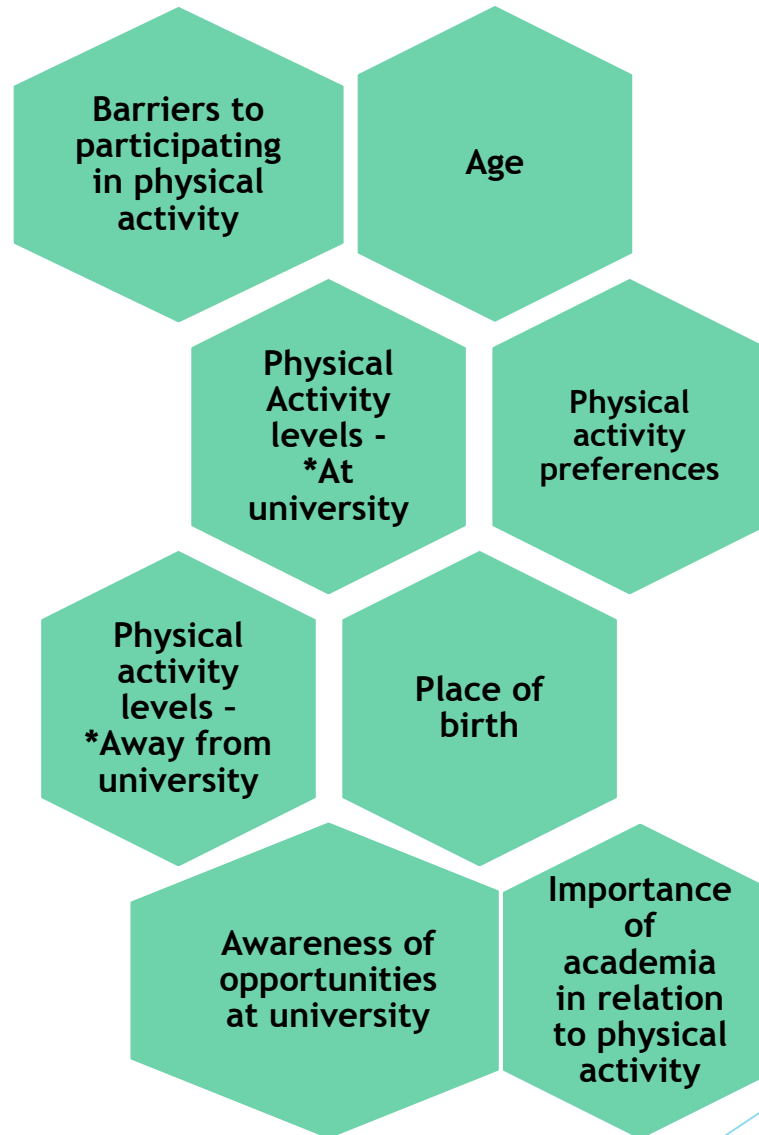
# Mixed Methods

## Stage 1: Questionnaire

- 50 questionnaires  
(HE4 students)

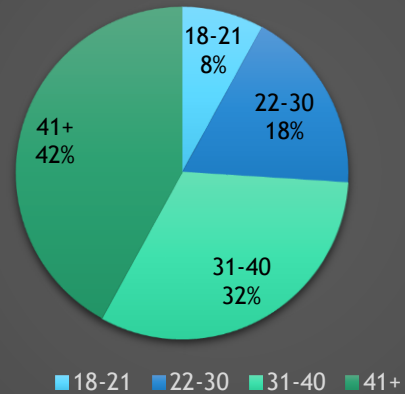
## Stage 2: Interviews

- 10 individual interviews  
(Semi-structured)

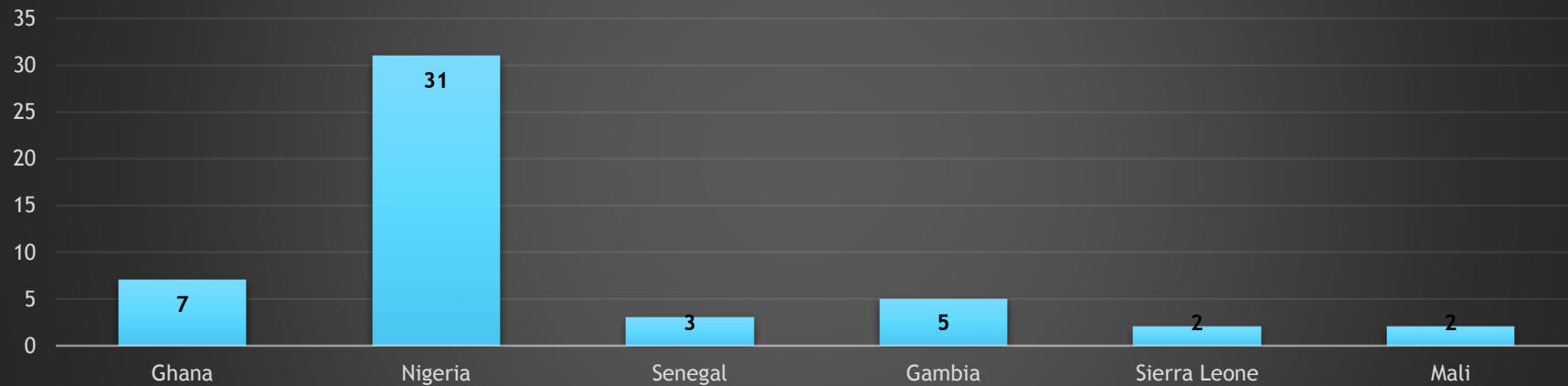


# Research Findings

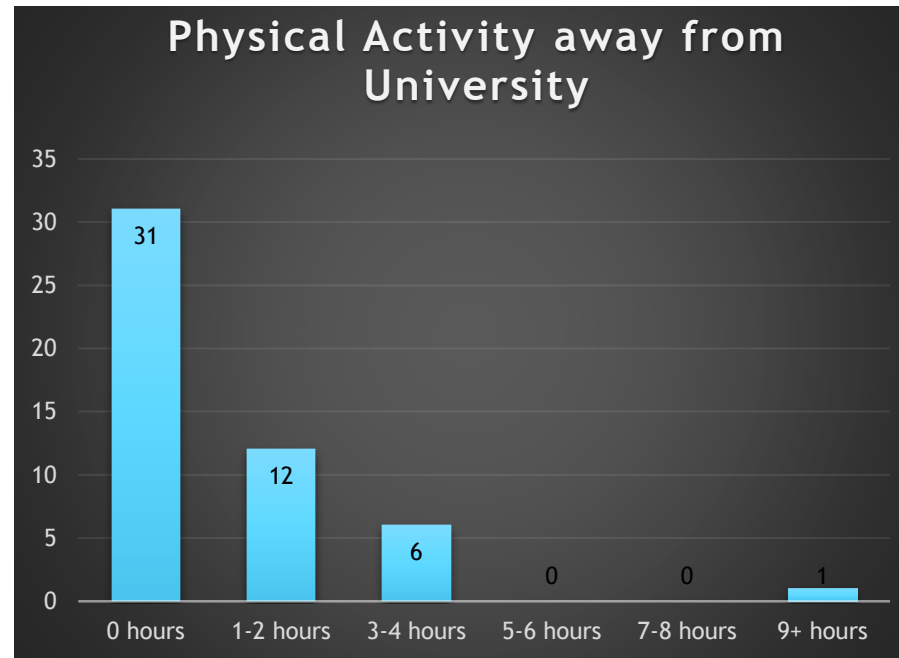
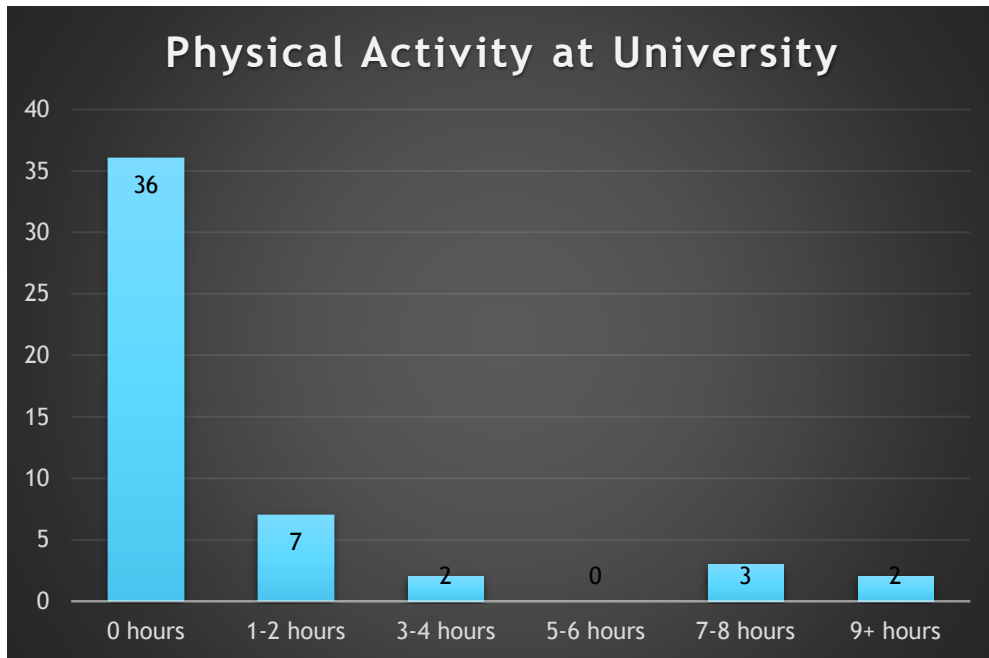
Age of Participants



Country of Birth

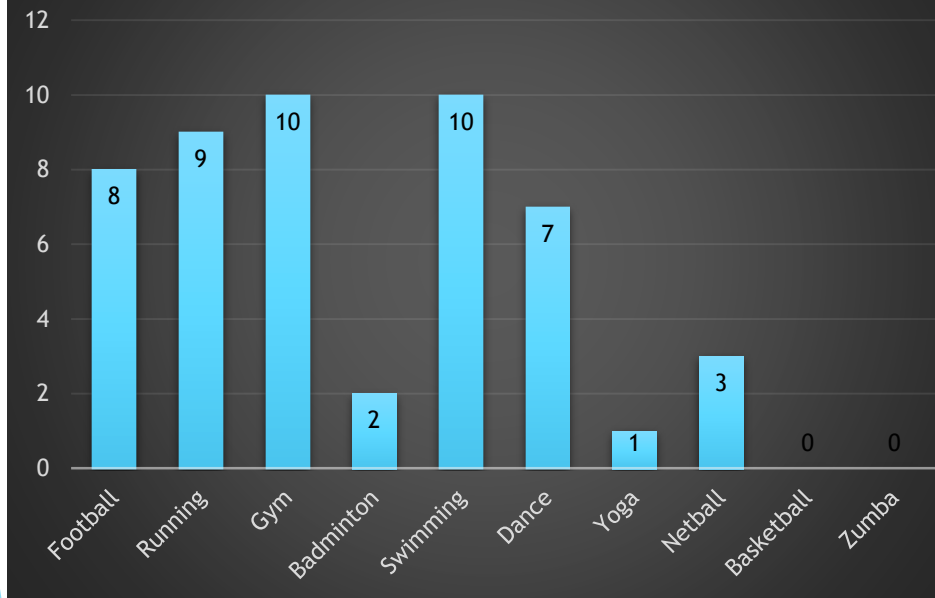


# Research Findings

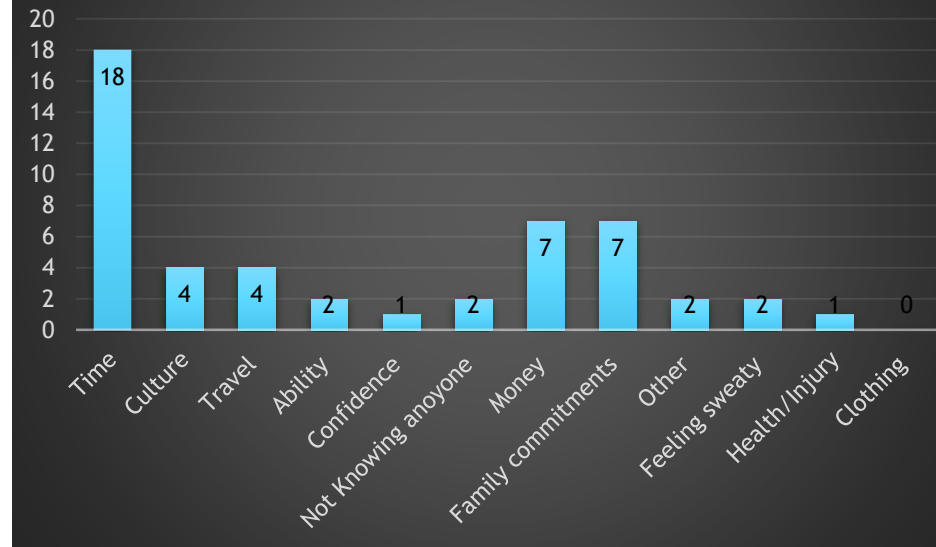


# Research Findings

## Physical Activity Preference



## Barriers to Participating in Physical Activity



# Research Findings

## 1. How often do you participate in sport or physical activity?

R5 - "I don't do any exercise at all, I did a lot when I was a teenager. Now my family and university is my priority"

R4 - "Sometimes I will join in with my children at the park, in football or tennis. I don't do anything at university"

R7 - "I do not participate at university, but I go to the gym and fitness classes"

R8 - "No, I don't do any physical activity at all. I know I should, to prevent health problems but I need to focus on my university work"

## 2. When would be an appropriate time for you to take part in physical activity at university?

R1 - "I would take part if I had the time, but with family commitments its difficult to find time"

R2 - "I am not fit at all. I would need to increase my fitness first, maybe running or going to the gym"

R6 - "(laugh) I have not ran in a very long time. If it was at a time when I was free and it was free, I would think about joining in"

R10 - "It depends on my health, sometimes I find it difficult to attend university"



# Research Findings

## 3. Are you aware of the extra-curricular opportunities available at university (i.e. recreational or competitive)?

R1 - "I remember them advertising sports teams, at the fresher's fayre"

R8 - "Yes, I looked into this for one of my health assignments. The lunchtime sessions in the sports hall are a good option, because they are free for students"

R10 - I hate the idea of doing anything outside of my studies because I pay high fees and need to achieve good grades, to please my sponsors

R3 - "I know they have sports teams, like football and hockey but not sure about recreational"

R6 - "No, not really. They advertise sport at induction fayres, but I never look at it because its for the young students.

## 4. What are the barriers for you participating in physical activity?

R7 - "Finding the time, I would like to do more classes at the gym. Sometimes I have to work, or have assignments at university to finish"

R9 - "I have four children, who are under the age of 12. They are my priority, finding the time for me to do exercise is very difficult"

R3 - "I would like to swim more often, but I don't drive which makes it difficult. I used to play football, but I don't think I am fit enough to play anymore and wouldn't know where to find a team that is the right level for me"

R10 - "My health problems and I have two children whom I am a single mum too

# Research Findings

## 5. What are your families views on you taking part in physical activity?

**R2** - “My husband goes to the gym and my children do sport after school, my husband has mentioned that I should try walking more often. Because I have put on a lot of weight”

**R8** - “I come from a very sporty family, so I try to run and swim regularly”

**R9** - “I don’t know, more women do get involved in physical activity now. I think my family would encourage me to get involved in something that doesn’t risk my culture or religion”

**R4** - “My family encourage me to take part when we go on days out, they find it funny when I join in. When I lived in Nigeria, I walked a lot but I didn’t do any sport. My family encouraged me to excel in cooking, hair braiding, knitting and sewing”

**R5** - “I think my husband would like me to do physical activity. Because of the shift patterns he works, it’s difficult to find the time because of the children and university”

# Limitations

- ▶ Small sample size
- ▶ Only based upon one university
- ▶ Lack of data, specifically for African women physical activity levels in the UK
- ▶ Insufficient information on the promotional strategies, of extra-curricular activities within University sport organisations

# Preliminary Research Analysis

## Questionnaire

- ▶ 74% of respondents were aged 31+ (mature students)
- ▶ 62% of respondents were of Nigerian descent
- ▶ 72% of respondents, completed no physical activity at university. A higher number of respondents, completed physical activity away from university
- ▶ In chronological order the activities listed were the top five preferences; gym, swimming, running, football and dance
- ▶ Key barriers to participation are time, money and family commitments

## Interviews

- ▶ Family is a key constraint to participating in physical activity
- ▶ No general mention of stereotypes or myths
- ▶ Worries over fitness and ability levels are present, to take part in physical activity at university.
- ▶ Clear differentiation between competitive sport teams and recreational opportunities
- ▶ Common barriers are family and time (no mention of money)
- ▶ Availability of family support

# The value and importance of Extra Curricular Physical Activity



## ► Employability

- Commissioned by British Universities and Colleges (BUCS) and undertaken by Sport Research Intelligence Sportive (2013)
- 13 interviews with VC's
- 112 interviews with graduate employers
- 5,838 interviews with graduates



*“Average salary of graduates who engaged with sport at university is £32,552, compared with £26,728 for those who did not” (Bucs.org.uk, 2018).*

£5824

# Suggested Intervention

- ▶ Introduce free sessions of short 20-30 minute sessions of exercise which could include brisk walking, jogging and fitness class based activities (Nhs.uk, 2018)
- ▶ Implement Peer Assisted Study Support (PASS) programs, where students can opt in to receive study support and be referred to study and well-being representatives
- ▶ Introduce sport based outreach projects can enable purposeful relationships, with under-represented communities (Rosso et al., 2016)
- ▶ Consideration to be given to culture differences, by applying an individualised approach in order to enhance the integration of international students in UK universities (Andrade, 2006)



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Questions ?